

June 25, 2008

The Honorable David R. Obey  
Chair  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey:

Last year many of the organizations listed below opposed language in the House FY08 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations bill that would have prohibited the use of federal funds “to administer to any child under 3 years of age an influenza vaccine during the 2008-2009 influenza season for which thimerosal is listed on the labeling as an ingredient.” That provision, if enacted, could have put thousands of children at risk of severe complications – even death – from influenza. We thank you for working successfully to ensure that the language was not in the final appropriations act.

We are writing again this year to urge you to oppose any efforts to insert this or other language that would restrict the use, or limit the availability, of recommended vaccines. During this most recent influenza season, 83 confirmed influenza-related pediatric deaths were reported, one as young as 29 days of age. Half of these children were less than 5 years old and most had not been vaccinated against influenza. Of the 72 (86%) pediatric deaths who had vaccination information available, only 10% had received influenza vaccine. Many other children were hospitalized as a result of influenza and its complications. Vaccinating children against life threatening diseases is a critical public health imperative.

Congress should not prohibit the use of federal funds to administer vaccines that save lives. We therefore urge the Appropriations Committee to do everything possible to ensure that all children are protected against vaccine preventable diseases, and that language restricting the availability or use of vaccines be kept out of the legislation before the Committee.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter and for your strong support of childhood immunization.

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Medical Association  
American Public Health Association  
Association of Immunization Managers  
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Association of State and Territorial Public Health Social Workers

Campaign for Public Health  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Every Child By Two  
Immunization Action Coalition  
Immunization Coalition of Washington, DC  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of STD Directors  
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
Partnership for Prevention  
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society  
Philadelphia Immunization Coalition  
Society for Adolescent Medicine  
Task Force for Child Survival and Development  
Voices for Vaccines